

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 273

EC 201 735

AUTHOR Snow, Mary B.
TITLE Survey of Programs for Low-Achieving Students: Practices, Opinions, and Recommendation.
INSTITUTION Nevada State Dept. of Education, Carson City. Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch.
PUB DATE Jan 87
NOTE 47p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Handicap Identification; *Learning Disabilities; Learning Problems; Low Achievement; *Needs Assessment; *Remedial Instruction; Rural Education; *State Surveys; Teaching Methods; Urban Education

IDENTIFIERS *Nevada

ABSTRACT

A survey of 40 school personnel responsible for remedial and special education in Nevada school districts was conducted to determine diagnostic tools and remedial programs for students with dyslexia and other learning problems. Major findings included the following: that 86.5% of school districts have a systematic process for identifying students with learning problems; that the most common identification measures are an achievement battery followed by teacher ratings and individual intelligence tests; that 51.4% of respondents said students with learning problems were not receiving needed services; that more respondents in rural than urban areas reported students in need of services; that 75.7% believed a wide selection of tests should be available for diagnostic purposes; and that all respondents believed teachers needed a wide selection of instructional approaches to coincide with individual learning styles and student needs. Recommendations for improvement included inservice for teachers and administrators on effective methodology, a statewide compensatory education program, reduction in class size, increased funding for direct services while improving existing programs, and design of new specific interventions. (DB)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

Survey of
PROGRAMS FOR LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS:
Practices, Opinions, and Recommendation

by
Mary B. Snow, PhD

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary B.
Snow

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EUGENE J. PARLOV
Superintendent of Public Instruction

MICHAEL R. ALASTURY
Associate Superintendent

Research and Evaluation Branch

State Office Building

1000 East Center Street, Salt Lake City, Nevada 84103

January 1987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEVADA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Janice A. Clarke, President

June M. Herrmann, Vice-President

Frank R. Brown

Dr. Lonnie Hammargren

John K. Hill

Dr. Frank R. Krajewski

Duane Lawrence

Marianne Long

Carley Sullivan

Major Findings

- 86.5% of district personnel responsible for remedial education and special education indicated that their districts have a systematic process for identifying students with learning problems.
- The most commonly used means of identification is an Achievement Battery followed by Teacher Ratings and Individual Intelligence Tests. Most districts use more than one means to identify students with learning problems.
- 51.4% of all respondents said students with learning problems were not receiving the services they need in their districts.
- When results for urban and rural respondents were viewed separately, 60% of the rural district respondents said their students with learning problems were not receiving the services they need, whereas only 33.3% of the urban district respondents felt this to be the case for their students.
- 64.9% of respondents agreed with the estimate that students who have learning problems make up 15% of the total school population.
- 75.7% of respondents believe a wide selection of tests should be available for the diagnosis of learning problems.
- All respondents believe that it is important for teachers to have a wide selection of approaches available to coincide with individual learning styles and needs of students.
- In order to improve services to these children, 45.9% of respondents recommended increased funding for direct services using existing programs; 32.4% recommended "other" programs such as inservice training, a statewide compensatory education program and reduction in class size.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Background	1
Methodology	2
Results	2
Current Identification of and Response to Students with Learning Problems	2
Opinions Concerning the Extent of the Problem and Effective Diagnosis and Response	5
Recommendations for Improvement	8
Discussion	11

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Patterns of Use in Identification	6
2 Ranking of Proposed Areas of Research	12
3 Ranking of Proposed Programs	12

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	
1 Do You Have a Systematic Process for Identifying Students with Learning Problems	3
2 What Methods Are Used to Identify Students with Learning Problems	4
3 Are Students with Learning Problems Receiving Services Commensurate with their Needs	7
4 Where Should Emphasis be Placed Next in Order to Improve Services	9
5 Where Should Emphasis be Placed Next in Order to Improve Services by Whether Students' Needs are Currently being Met or Not	10

APPENDICES

- A. Legislative Resolution No. 3
- B. The Questionnaire and Cover Letter
- C. The Verbatim Responses

Background

As a result of the Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 54 adopted by the 1983 session of the Nevada legislature, a legislative subcommittee was formed to study dyslexia and other specific learning problems. This committee, composed of two legislators and representatives of the State Department of Education, the Nevada State Education Association, and the general public, was charged with developing recommendations to address the needs of pupils in Nevada who experience such learning problems.

This target group of pupils is estimated to constitute from 15 to 20 percent of all pupils in Nevada based on past results of the state prescribed standard examinations of proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics administered in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11. These are the students who are not succeeding in the regular education program, but do not qualify for special education and may not qualify for Chapter I or other programs with specific eligibility criteria. These students, who have consistent difficulty in mastering the basic skills, are in need of additional compensatory services.

The legislative subcommittee met during the fall and winter of 1983-84. They heard testimony and conducted surveys of the Nevada School Districts in order to obtain information regarding the testing instruments and methods of instruction being used with students who have specific learning problems. In the spring the committee developed recommendations and legislative proposals to address the needs of students with learning problems. The recommendations included the provision of a compensatory education program, information dissemination, diagnostic and prescriptive assistance for students, research and program development, financial support and the training of certificated personnel.

Following from this work were Assembly Bills and Resolutions which were considered during the 1985 session of the Nevada legislature. Included among these was Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 3, a copy of which can be found in Appendix A. This resolution urged the Superintendent of Public Instruction to conduct research on the relationship between the diagnosis and correction of learning problems. However, before this specific research problem could be addressed, it was necessary, as a first step, to determine the current status of the diagnostic tools and programs being used in the districts. The present survey was designed to supply this information. As the results of this research project are reviewed, plans will be made for future work more closely related to the specific content of the resolution.

Methodology

Plans for this study including research design and instrument development were carried out by a committee of Department staff from Planning, Research, and Evaluation; Special Education and Administration during the winter of 1986. The questionnaire was pre-tested in April by Special Education staff and underwent subsequent revision.

Lists of all personnel responsible at the district level for remedial education and for special education in Nevada were compiled. It was decided that questionnaires would be sent to this total universe which consisted of 40 persons after duplications were eliminated. Questionnaires and cover letters were first mailed out on August 15, 1986. The second wave of questionnaires, mailed only to those who had not responded, was sent on September 16. Thirty-seven persons responded in all. The response rate was 92.5%.

Analysis of the data and report writing occurred during November and December, 1986. It should be noted that the results reported for each question are a compilation of the individual responses of these District Directors of Remedial Education and/or Special Education. However, these individuals had been instructed to respond to the questions "as they relate to your district." The number of respondents representing each district varied from 1 to 6.

The main findings are presented in the Results section. Verbatim comments associated with the questions are available in Appendix C.

Results

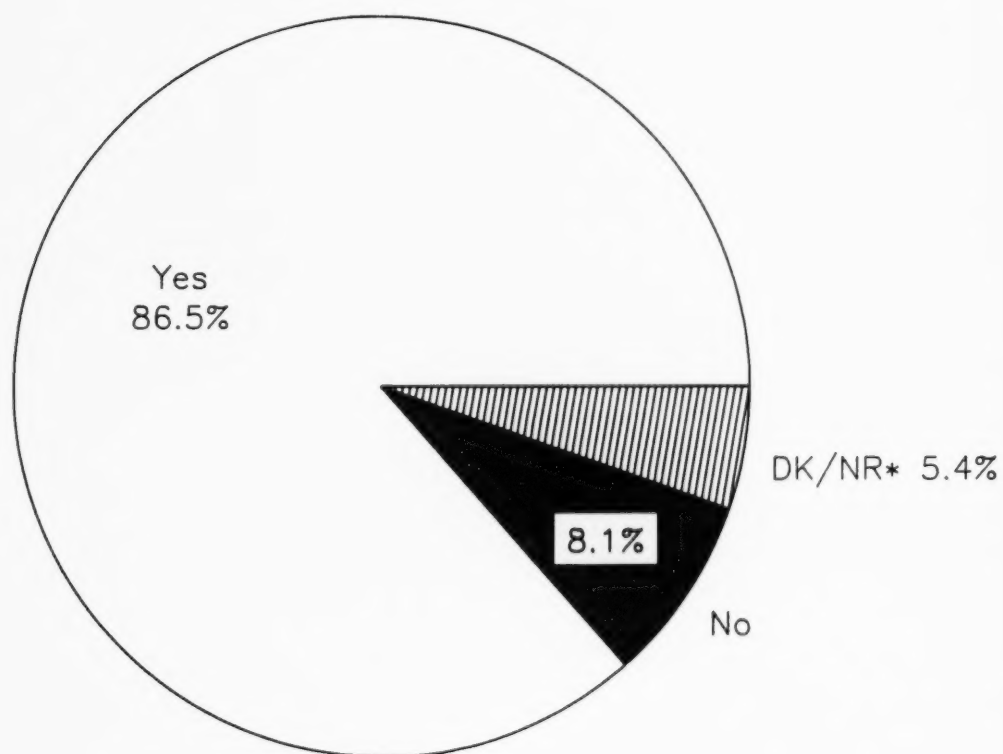
Current Identification of and Response to Students with Learning Problems

The great majority (86.5%) of respondents indicated that their school districts do have a systematic process for identifying students who have learning problems, but do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education. A few were unsure about how to respond, saying they have a process, but that it isn't systematic. These results are presented in Figure 1.

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked to indicate the means by which these students with learning problems are identified within their districts. When viewed separately, the most commonly used means of identification is the Achievement Battery followed by Teacher Ratings and Individual Intelligence Tests (See Figure 2).

Figure 1

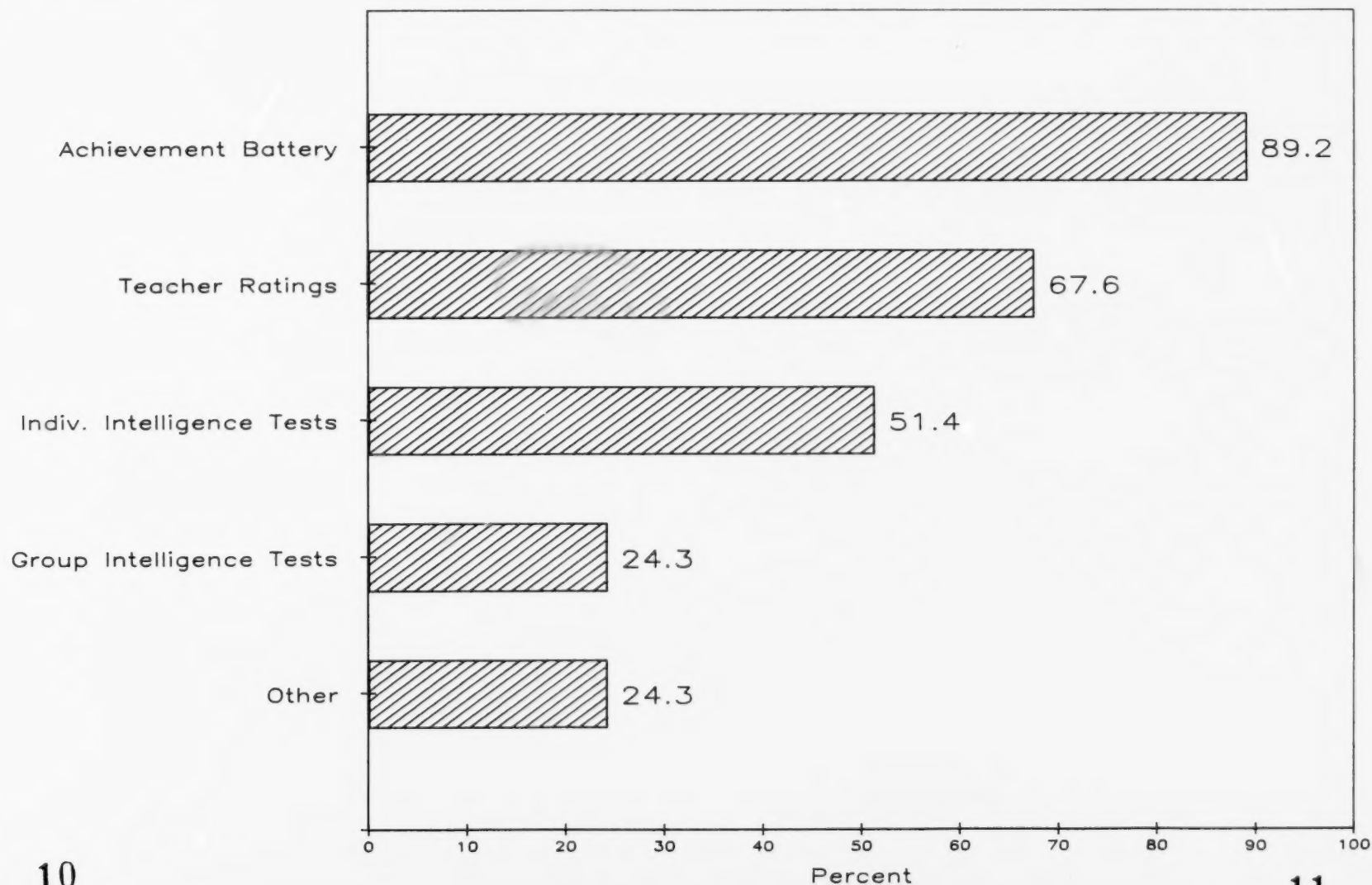
Do You Have a Systematic Process
for Identifying Students with Learning Problems
in Your School District? (n=37)



*Don't Know, No Response

Figure 2

Percent Who Indicate that Each of the Following Methods
of Identifying Students With Learning Problems
is Used Within their School Districts



The "other" were specified as:

- The Nevada Proficiency Examination
- The English as a Second Language Assessment Battery
- Curriculum Based Assessment
- Personal Observation

However, most respondents indicated that they use more than one means to identify these students. These patterns of use are presented in rank order in Table 1. The highest frequency patterns are the use of an Achievement Battery plus Teacher Ratings or the use of Individual Intelligence Tests plus an Achievement Battery plus Teacher Ratings.

Probably the most critical question in this survey asked District Directors of Remedial Education and/or Special Education whether they believe that students with learning problems in their districts are receiving services commensurate with their needs. Nineteen (51.4%) replied "no" to this question, fourteen (37.8%) said "yes" and four (10.8%) were not sure or did not respond.

However, when the respondents from Clark and Washoe were separated from the other district respondents, the results were quite different. Only 33.3% of the urban (Clark and Washoe) respondents felt their students' needs were not being met, while 60% of the rural district respondents said "no" their students' needs were not being met. These differences can be seen in Figure 3.

Opinions Concerning the Extent of the Problem and Effective Diagnosis and Response

The majority of respondents (64.9%) agreed with the estimate that students who have learning problems but are not eligible for special education make up 15% of the total school population. However, 21.6% felt that this estimate was too low while 10.8% felt it was too high, according to their particular experiences.

Two questions sought to elicit respondents' opinions regarding the diagnosis of learning problems. Respondents were asked whether a wide selection of tests should be made available and whether all Nevada school districts should use a standard battery of tests with every child suspected of having learning problems. A high majority (75.7%) believe that a wide selection of tests should be available whereas a minority (29.7%) believe a standard battery of tests should be used with all these children in all school districts. A number of those who agreed with the use of a standard battery added that they agreed provided they were not restricted to only this means of diagnosis.

Table 1

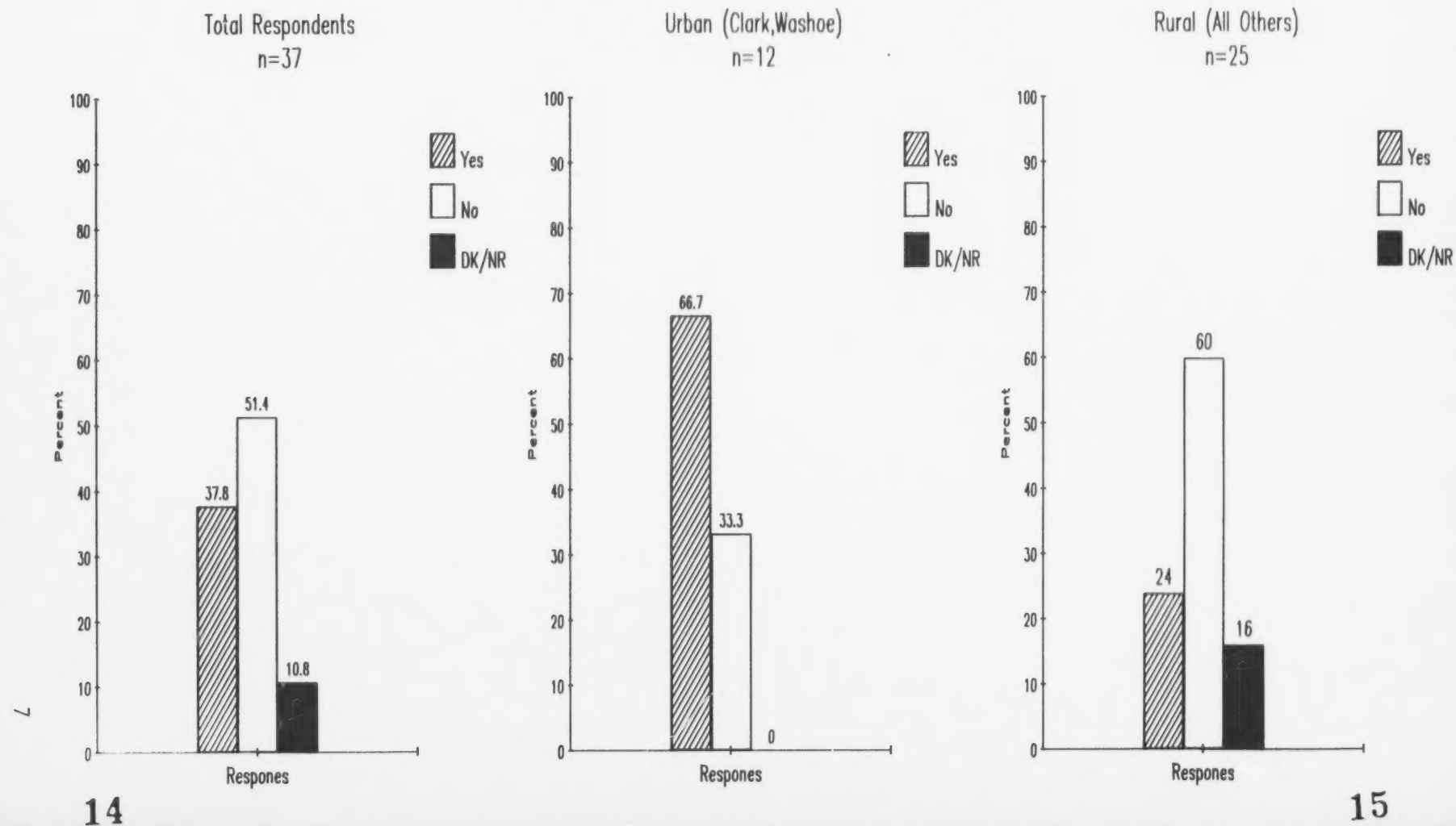
Patterns of Use in Identifying
Students with Learning Problems

Code: a = Group Intelligence Tests
b = Individual Achievement Tests
c = Achievement Battery
d = Teacher Ratings
e = Other

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
c,d	9
b,c,d	6
c	5
a,b,c,d	4
a,b,c,d,e	3
b,c,d,e	2
b	1
b,c	1
c,e	1
a,b,e	1
c,d,e	1
a,b,c,e	1
no response	2
Total	37

Figure 3

Are Students With Learning Problems Receiving Services Which are Commensurate With Their Needs?



Other questions dealt with instructional approaches to be used with children diagnosed as having learning problems. Almost all respondents (94.6%) agreed that the number of approaches used in a district will vary with the training and experience of teachers. There was total agreement with the statement that "It is important for teachers to have a wide selection of approaches available to coincide with the individual learning styles and needs of the students involved". Consistent with this response is the fact that the great majority (83.8%) disagreed with the statement that "all school districts in Nevada should use the same instructional approaches and materials for teaching students with learning problems".

Recommendations for Improvement

Respondents were then asked how services to these students could best be improved and specifically where the emphasis should be placed in these efforts. As can be seen in Figure 4, the highest percent (45.9%) recommended "increased funding for direct services using existing programs". However, the next highest percent (32.4%) marked "other" and specified in writing their suggestions for improvement of services. These included the following:

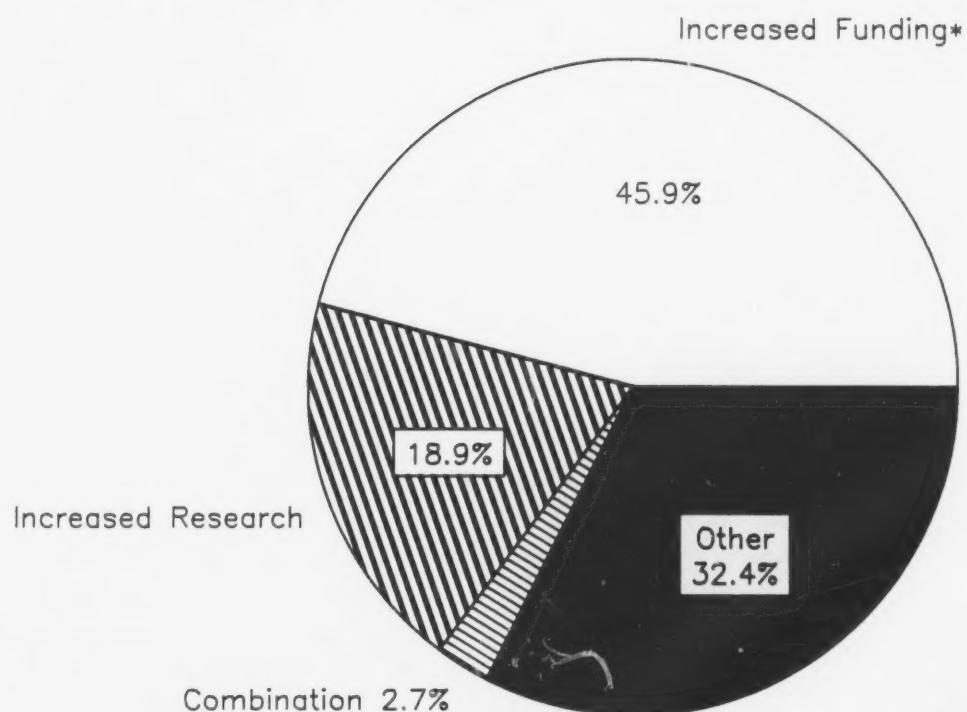
1. Inservice for teachers and administrators in the latest methodology, what works, how to use, good clinical supervision, etc.
2. Existing programs supplemented by a statewide compensatory education program.
3. Reduction in class size.
4. Increased funding for direct services while improving existing programs.
5. The design of new specific interventions (e.g. more for slow learners who are not learning disabled).
6. Both research and direct services.

Less than one-fifth of the respondents favored an emphasis on increased research.

In Figure 5 there is an attempt to determine whether those who said "yes, the needs of our students with learning problems are being met" responded in a different way to "how services could be improved" than those who said, "no, the needs of our students are not being met".

Figure 4

As a Next Phase Toward Improving Services
to Children With Learning Problems,
Where Should Emphasis be Placed?



*for direct services using existing programs

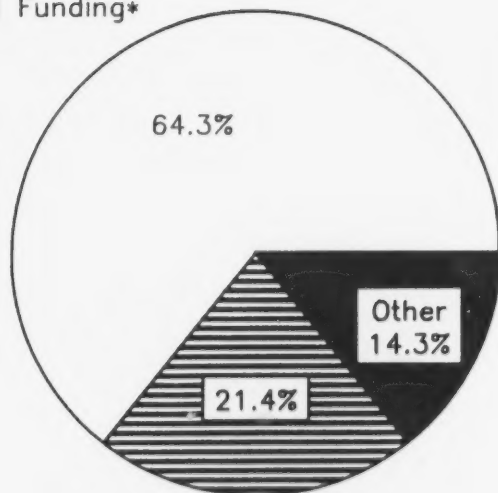
Figure 5

Where Should Emphasis on Improving Services be Placed by Respondents Who Say:

Yes, the needs of our students with learning problems are being met.

No, the needs of our students with learning problems are not being met.

Increased Funding*



Increased Research

Increased Funding*



Increased Research

Not unpredictably, those who felt their students' needs were being met put greater emphasis on additional funding for existing programs while those who felt their students' needs were not being met put equal emphasis on "other", meaning new programs or approaches as well as on additional funding for existing direct services. Those who felt their students' needs were being met were also somewhat more amenable to research than were the others.

Finally, the district personnel responsible for remedial education and special education were asked to rank the areas in which additional research would be most effective and to rank the new programs which would be most effective. Results are displayed in Tables 2 and 3.

Regarding areas for research, respondents gave the highest ranking to "matching assessment and remediation" (54.1%) with lower rankings to "effective remediation techniques" (24.3%) and "effective assessment" (21.6%). In the ranking of new programs, "compensatory education programs for students" (54.1%) received the highest "most effective" response, followed by "increased teaching personnel" (43.2%) and "reduced class size" (43.2%). Clearly ranked as least effective was "longer school days and/or an extended school year" (73.0%).

Discussion

This survey reveals a high degree of recognition by Nevada school districts that a significant number of children have learning problems, but are not eligible for special education services. Most districts have a systematic process for identifying these students and use multiple means of identification.

Over one-half of the district level personnel responsible for remedial and/or special education judge that this group of students are not currently receiving the help they need. In rural districts this figure rises to sixty percent. The urban districts evidently have somewhat more in the way of resources available to meet these needs.

There is a very strong belief among these district personnel that a wide selection of tests should be made available for the diagnosis of specific problems and a wide selection of approaches should be utilized in meeting the needs of these students whose specific problems and learning styles vary greatly. Conversely, they are opposed to any restrictions on the test batteries or instructional approaches which may be used.

Table 2

Percent Who Rank Each of the Following
Proposed Areas of Research as Most, Somewhat, or Least Effective.

<u>Research In</u>	<u>Most Effective</u>	<u>Somewhat Effective</u>	<u>Least Effective</u>	<u>No Response</u>	<u>Total</u>
Effective Assessment	21.6 (8)	8.1 (3)	64.9 (24)	5.4 (2)	100 (37)
Effective Remediation Techniques	24.3 (9)	54.1 (20)	13.5 (5)	8.1 (3)	100 (37)
Matching Assessment and Remediation	54.1 (20)	21.6 (8)	16.2 (6)	8.1 (3)	100 (37)

Table 3

Percent Who Rank Each of the Following
Proposed Programs as Most, Somewhat, or Least Effective.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Most Effective</u>	<u>Somewhat Effective</u>	<u>Least Effective</u>	<u>No Response</u>	<u>Total</u>
Compensatory Education Programs for Students	54.1 (20)	24.3 (9)	16.2 (6)	5.4 (2)	100 (37)
Earlier Admission to Remedial Programs	35.1 (13)	37.8 (14)	24.3 (9)	2.7 (1)	100 (37)
Increased Diagnostic Personnel	21.6 (8)	35.1 (13)	37.8 (14)	5.4 (2)	100 (37)
Increased Teaching Personnel	43.2 (16)	40.5 (15)	13.5 (5)	2.7 (1)	100 (37)
Reduced Class Size	43.2 (16)	32.4 (12)	21.6 (8)	2.7 (1)	100 (37)
Longer School Days and/or an Extended School Year	16.2 (6)	8.1 (3)	73.0 (27)	2.7 (1)	100 (37)

In their recommendations for improving services to this group of children, the need for more funding for current programs is emphasized by almost one-half of the respondents. The implication is that not all students who need these direct services can now be served. Less than one-fifth of the respondents would place the emphasis for improvement on increased funding for research. Overall thirty-two percent feel the emphasis should be placed on efforts other than increased funding for existing programs or for research. Some of these specified efforts are: 1) inservice/training for teachers and administrators; 2) a statewide compensatory education program; 3) the design of new specific interventions; 4) the improvement of existing programs; and 5) a reduction in class size. Those who say their students' needs are not being met are even more likely (42%) to point to the need for new efforts to solve the problem.

Most respondents seem to feel that enough research has been done, that there is enough known about learning problems and that what is needed is to design, fund, and train personnel to provide the programs which will meet the different needs falling under the generic label of "learning problems".

However, if new research is initiated, respondents favor the area of "matching assessment and remediation" over the separate areas of "effective remediation" or "effective assessment". In checking their preference for a list of new programs, respondents rank "compensatory education programs for students" as first and both "increased teaching personnel" and "reduced class size" as second.

In conclusion, this survey provides evidence that low-achieving children constitute a recognized problem in Nevada schools and that more resources and support will be required if this problem is to be solved.

APPENDIX A

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 3—COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 1, 1985

Referred to Committee on Education

SUMMARY—Urges superintendent of public instruction to determine correlation between methods of diagnosis and correction for pupils who have dyslexia or other specific disabilities in learning. (BDR 234)



EXPLANATION—Matter in *italics* is new; matter in brackets [] is material to be omitted.

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Urging the superintendent of public instruction to conduct research to determine whether the methods used to diagnose problems resulting from dyslexia and other specific disabilities in learning correlate with the methods used to correct such problems.

- 1 WHEREAS, The amount of available information relating to dyslexia
2 and other specific disabilities in learning is increasing rapidly; and
3 WHEREAS, The effectiveness of the methods used to diagnose and
4 correct problems resulting from these disabilities in learning is the sub-
5 ject of debate among many educators; and
6 WHEREAS, Such information is most valuable when effectively
7 applied to correct problems in learning; and
8 WHEREAS, It is an urgent concern among educators to determine the
9 most effective methods for diagnosing and correcting such problems in
10 learning; now, therefore, be it
11 RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE SENATE
12 CONCURRING, That the legislature urges the superintendent of public
13 instruction to conduct research to determine whether the methods used
14 to diagnose problems resulting from dyslexia and other specific
15 disabilities in learning correlate with the methods used to correct such
16 problems.

APPENDIX B

August 15, 1986

Dear

The Nevada State Legislature, during its 1985 session, urged the State Department of Education to undertake a survey to identify the procedures used when programming for those students who exhibit learning problems but are not eligible for special education services. We are particularly desirous of obtaining your responses because your experience in programming for students with learning problems will contribute significantly towards solving some of the issues we face in this important area of education.

The enclosed questionnaire has been tested with a sample of educators, and we have revised it in order to make it possible for us to obtain all of the necessary data while requiring a minimum of your time. The average time for educators completing the questionnaire was 9 1/2 minutes.

It will be appreciated if you return the questionnaire prior to **October 1, 1986**. A stamped, self addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Other phases of this research cannot be carried out until we complete analysis of the questionnaire data.

We would welcome any comments that you may have concerning any aspect of this questionnaire and will be pleased to send you a summary of the results if you desire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kevin Crowe, Ed.D., Director
Planning, Research & Evaluation Branch

KC/sb

SURVEY OF METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION AND SERVICES
AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS

The Nevada Department of Education is undertaking this survey in an attempt to quantify the correlation between the actual diagnosis and the prescriptive programming provided to students who exhibit learning problems but who do not meet the eligibility criteria established in the Standards for Administration of Special Education Programs. These students are sometimes referred to as "low achievers" or "remedial students".

Please respond to the following questions as they relate to your district.

1. Do you have a systematic process for identifying students who may exhibit learning problems, but who do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what means of identification is used?

- _____ a. Group intelligence tests
- _____ b. Individual intelligence tests
- _____ c. Achievement battery
- _____ d. Teacher ratings
- _____ e. Other (specify) _____

COMMENTS: _____

2. There have been estimates that these students may comprise up to 15% of the total school population. Do you think this percent is...

_____ too high _____ about right _____ too low

COMMENTS: _____

3. Are students with learning problems receiving services which are commensurate with their needs?

Yes _____ No _____

COMMENTS: _____

4. It is important to have a wide selection of tests available because certain tests may yield information that other tests do not yield.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

COMMENTS: _____

5. All school districts in Nevada should use a standard battery of tests with every child who is suspected of having learning problems or specific leaning disabilities.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

COMMENTS: _____

6. The number of approaches used in a district will vary with the training and experience of the teachers.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

COMMENTS: _____

7. It is important for teachers to have a wide selection of approaches available to coincide with the individual learning styles and needs of the students involved.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

COMMENTS: _____

8. All school districts in Nevada should use the same instructional approaches and materials for teaching students with learning problems.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

COMMENTS: _____

9. As a next phase towards improving services to these students, do you feel that emphasis should be placed on:

(check only 1)

_____ Increased research to determine the existing status of these types of programs.

_____ Increased emphasis should be placed on obtaining additional funds for direct services to students using existing programs and procedures

_____ Other _____

Research

10. If additional research is considered, please rank the areas in which you feel this research would be most effective.

Please use all numbers

1=most effective

3=least effective

- _____ Research in effective assessment
- _____ Research in effective remediation techniques
- _____ Research in matching assessment and remediation

Programs

11. If additional programs should be provided, please rank those programs which you feel would be most effective.

Please use all numbers

1=most effective

6=least effective

- _____ Compensatory educational programs for students in need of remediation
- _____ Earlier admission to remedial school programs
- _____ Increased diagnostic personnel
- _____ Increased teaching personnel
- _____ Reduced class size
- _____ Longer school days and/or an extended school year

IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, PLEASE USE THE BOTTOM AND BACK OF THIS PAGE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS RESEARCH PROJECT.

APPENDIX C

Verbatim Responses to

1. Do you have a systematic process for identifying students who may exhibit learning problems, but who do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education?

If yes, what means of identification is used?

"YES"

- Grades 1-8 - Stanford Achievement Tests
Grade 9 - SAT
Grades 10-11-12 - DSAT optional, others individual. Analysis of achievement test data is followed by counselor testing, teacher rating and testing if need is suspected.
- CRT - Criteria references tests. Math management system. Reading management system.
- CCSD administers the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) and a teacher developed writing checklist.
- SAT staine score 1-3 or 4 with recommendations will be accepted in Chapter I Classes.
- The Chapter I selection process is specifically aimed at students who do not qualify for special education. The special education evaluation process also identifies many students with problems who do not qualify for special education.
- Students transferring to us having been in Chapter I.
- Nevada Proficiency Examination
- Curriculum based assessment
- ESL Assessment Battery
- Yes, but...Our process is systematic; however, we cannot discriminate against handicaps in Chapter I.
The achievement test (SAT) and teacher recommendations are the base of identifying students for Chapter I. Further refinement of "most need" is determined by the score on the SAT, report card average, Parent/Teacher request, and prior participation.
- Record reviews, informal testing, performance in relation to his/her peers.

Question #1 (YES responses continued)

- Criteria reference testing. The districts tests are given to report the child's progress to the school and parent as well as identify those eligible for title programs. Since title programs are not in every school, the student who may be eligible cannot receive the services.
- Nevada Proficiency Examination
- Competency tests 9th and 11th grades. Many are referred for individualized testing also.

"NO"

- We do not have a formal process for all schools. We do however, constantly work to identify and work with students who have difficulty in school. We utilize B, C, and D in this process.
- Not systematic
Chapter I
Pre-referral Intervention Form

"YES AND NO"

- By achievement test we are aware of students who are below grade level.

"NO RESPONSE"

- Personal observation. The students I deal with are migrants, mostly hispanic. Their learning difficulties stem from: a. Difficulties with English (a foreign language for many). b. Impoverished home background. c. The uprooting resulting from frequent moves.

Verbatim Responses to

2. There have been estimates that these students may comprise up to 15% of the total school population. Do you think this percent is too high, about right, or too low?

"ABOUT RIGHT"

- Our April 1986 data indicates 13.3% of grades 2-9 scored in the lower quartile in reading and 15.6% in mathematics.
- This estimate is about accurate if language-different students are included in the percentage.
- The percentage, of course varies from school to school and district to district depending to a large extent upon the type of school "neighborhood" population.
- This estimate is made on the basis of students referred by teachers, parent, etc. for psychological testing because of suspected learning problems but who did not qualify for a Special Education program.
- I believe many are where they are because of curriculum compacting (we start too many too soon. They are not developmentally ready). We also teach reading (our main area of need) incorrectly and with too many "approaches."
- This is the approximate number of students who are discovered to be non-proficient in 3rd and 6th grade proficiency tests (1-3) on SAT.
- We showed 30% of our kindergarten students coming into the district delayed. We can remediate approximately 1/2 of this number in kindergarten and use a transitional 1st for the rest - works well. We are now working on putting a language class in at Head Start and encouraging preschools and day care to offer some direct instruction. This is a low language development area. We are encouraging more library story hours to outlying areas.

"TOO LOW"

- Need help
- The lower quartile would be expected to perform below average. Currently Special Education serves 85% of the lower quartile.

Question #2 (responses continued)

"TOO HIGH"

-- Between 10-12%

"DON'T KNOW"

-- Couldn't say since we see less than 2% of the total school population.

Verbatim Responses to

3. Are students with learning problems receiving services which are commensurate with their needs?

"YES"

- Using Chapter I, yes, in general.
- Insofar as we can actually determine their needs.
- In Chapter I students are receiving appropriate services.

"NO"

- Additional services are needed.
- For instance, our district is unable to provide tutorial support due to lack of funds. We serve only about 1/2 of students in the lower quartile.
- Not on a consistent basis.
- Those who meet a handicapping condition generally are. Those who do not qualify for special education are not.
- More needs to be done for the slow learners.
- Put in "low group"-given poor grades-not reinforced for working to potential.
- Two programs address the needs of this group. We use the same instructional model for all. Competency based programs should be instituted for academic and vocational courses.
- Too few teachers are willing to modify existing materials to meet students needs. Principals exert pressure to place non-eligible students in Special Education because they don't (the principals).
- Fiscal

Question #3 (responses continued)

"DON'T KNOW"

- We have students who fail. We test them yearly, often hold them back. We put them in Special Education if they test for this. We put them in Migrant Title I Programs. We put teachers and students one on one and they still don't achieve. Next year maybe.
- Mostly

"NOT SURE RESPONSES"

- Yes and no. This depends on the individual classroom teacher's motivation to work with these children in the regular classroom. In some cases teachers just don't know what is reasonable to expect from slow learners.
- For those students not meeting the criteria for Special Education.
- Depends on teacher.

Verbatim Responses to

4. It is important to have a wide selection of tests available because certain tests may yield information that other tests do not yield.

"AGREE"

- This is especially necessary as so many slow learners also have deprived language and experience backgrounds.
- And the use of teacher input and observation by outside (room) source are also key factors.
- Teachers need to be trained in more informal testing areas.
- Individual Needs/Differences

"DISAGREE"

- A specified, solid diagnostic battery should be adequate for remedial students. Others need testing available for Special Education. Something like Stanford Diagnostic Reading/Math should suffice.
- Too much testing can also be a waste of precious time.
- Special Education testing does a battery of tests already.

"DON'T KNOW"

- What is the purpose of the test? If the test measures what is being asked, then additional instruments are unnecessary.

"NO RESPONSE"

- For a school psychologist.

Verbatim Responses to

5. All school districts in Nevada should use a standard battery of tests with every child who is suspected of having learning problems.

"AGREE"

- Some students have exceptional needs not addressed in a standard battery.
- This would be helpful. It would eliminate referring children to Special Education only to find out they are "slow learners" and do not qualify.
- Critical if research data is to be gathered and comparisons are to be made.
- All teachers should recognize problems are present but at present can not test above achievement test or some inventory testing.
- I think we do for the most part now for norming.
- The SAT could be administered to all grade levels, which we do to help identify problem areas of students.
- So long as there is consensus on what that basic standard battery should be and if further testing should be indicated a psychometer would not be limited to the standard battery.
- If the battery covers all possibilities.

"DISAGREE"

- Not everyone comes out of the same package.
- Test selection should be adjusted on the basis of the student's problem.
- Should be some standardization for comparisons, but teachers' hands should not be tied.
- Language and developmental concerns, plus age of students are overriding factors. Plus whatever the referral question may be.
- Only the testing needed to answer diagnostic should be administered.

Question #5 (DISAGREE responses continued)

-- Absurd

-- Learning problems are most varied and it works best to assess individually and do some prescriptive programming.

"DON'T KNOW (Not Clear)"

-- What is the purpose of the test? Initial screening or diagnostic/prescriptive remediation?

Verbatim Responses to

6. The number of approaches used in a district will vary with the training and experience of the teachers.

"AGREE"

- Strongly agree. Greater special education inservice and workshops needed.
- Absolutely!
- And with the size of the district along with their perceptions of the current "vogue."
- More training needs to be available in this area to help teachers make the necessary adaptations and to learn appropriate approaches.
- Training and experiences of principals is key factor.
- Reality! Unless there is a specific program/materials/teacher/expertise/fiscal support the prevailing attitude will remain.
- Some of our teachers are extremely effective and their methods should be showcased!

"NO RESPONSE"

- The approaches depend on the purpose of the test. Use one approach for screening and a standard battery of prescription.

Verbatim Responses to

7. It is important for teachers to have a wide selection of approaches available to coincide with the individual learning styles and needs of the students involved.

"AGREE"

- This area needs to be more widely addressed and stressed.
- There is a problem of funds available for additional teacher training as well as for materials.
- Of course, and most do.
- No one teaching approach works with every student.
- This is a must.
- Regular classroom teachers need to be accountable for levels of instruction suitable for the entire class not just the "norm."
- Our district has initiated a Student Intervention Team approach - The team made up of regular classroom teachers primarily to discuss and implement adaptations in the regular classroom.
- The administration including curriculum services must address this topic as well. We do not see parallel alternative curriculums or learning strategies, or compensatory methods in our schools.
- Sounds great! Teachers are highly resistant to doing more than one approach. Even Special Education teachers.
- We need to be more aware of INDIVIDUAL needs. Less grouping; fiscal impact???
- "Learning styles" is proven but many teachers can't change approaches and methods. Need lots of inservice on this.

Verbatim Responses to

8. All school districts in Nevada should use the same instructional approaches and materials for teaching students with learning problems.

"AGREE"

- Materials should be available for teachers to select, based on individual needs.
- At least they should draw from the same well.

"DISAGREE"

- Teachers need freedom to choose appropriate materials for special student needs.
- Not all problems are the same - urban/rural. However, it would be most helpful to have a teacher's guide book listing materials available and where to obtain them. Also, inservice should be provided that specifically addresses slow learners.
- Approaches and materials designed for and effective with Clark/Washoe students may be difficult if not impossible for rural students to relate to especially remote rural. PDC's will standardize methodology somewhat.
- Questions 7 & 8 are similar. Again, there should be a variety of instructional methods and materials used in the classroom.
- It is very important that districts and teachers have the right to select materials which can best be utilized by them for the students benefit.
- Great difference between rural and city. Much of Nevada is rural.
- Depends class size and financial independence of the district.
- Instruction must be individualized.
- Teachers need to be trained in more informal testing areas.
- I would hope that school districts (teachers) would look at the individual student.
- If all teachers' prep (college) was the same-perhaps.

Question # 8 (DISAGREE responses continued)

- Teacher style is another consideration.
- We need to be more aware of INDIVIDUAL needs. Less grouping; fiscal impact.
- Depends on approach - certainly when backed up by research that shows strongly which materials and approaches.

"NO RESPONSE"

- It probably would be better for uniform instructions and materials but I don't think we should limit this.
- There should be standardization of criteria for referral identification, instructional objectives and exit criteria. I'm not sure the actual classroom materials and curriculum in every school must be exactly the same.

Verbatim Responses to

9. As a next phase towards improving services to these students, do you feel that emphasis should be placed on:

A. Increased research to determine the existing status of these types of programs.

- Data is currently available through Nevada Department of Education Basic Education on many of these programs.
- I am most impressed with the research Clark County did with Chapter I classes. The did 3 different times the remedial classes were offered and extended day showed far and above the best results/gains. I would like to see our Chapter I funding be used in this way (mandated by regulations from State requiring only extended day). We can eliminate most problems by remediating in Kindergarten (Early Prevention of School Failure etc.) and pre-schools but we are told we can't use our Chapter I funds for Kindergarten. Please use us for research to change this rule!

B. Increased emphasis should be placed on obtaining additional funds for direct services to students using existing programs and procedures.

- I feel the Chapter I program in Douglas County is directly affected by the low salary offered to Chapter I teachers. There is too much turn over in personnel for a good, ongoing program.
- Direct services to students using existing programs.
- Unless there is evidence that "existing programs" are detrimental to student...worse than simply mainstreaming.

C. Other

- Inservice to teachers.
- Increased emphasis on obtaining funds for direct services while improving existing programs and procedures.

Question #9 (C. Other - responses continued)

- If referring to LD students we need to meet the needs of the students who do not qualify for LD and are in a "class" of their own with maybe an IQ of 64 and are considered slow learners. Not enough is being done for them.
- Some of these students will recognize the problem they have and make up for this later in school. All of us have seen students who are having some serious problems in fitting in a regular class but do not test out for Special Education. If we keep them in school usually they will turn out to be productive people. We now have courses offered in many high schools for Vocational Technical students. I think we are on the right course. We don't need to lower our Special Education standards to pull in more students.
- Reduction of class size in elementary schools.
- Existing programs should be supplemented by state supported compensatory educational programs, small regular class size with varied instructional style and methods, and free access from one of these to another.
- Early intervention
- Fund a statewide comprehensive compensatory education program.
- Both
- Designing specific interventions applicable to this group which focuses on close coordination with regular classroom goals and emphasizes mainstream techniques.
- Plenty of research exists. We need informed leadership to direct teachers in the latest methodology. Many of the changes simply require in-service and good clinical supervision.
- Emphasis on administrators and teachers knowing of and using what we now know works with students.
- A full continuum of services including special education, remedial services and alternative education with relatively easy transitions from one to another.

Verbatim Responses to

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Rank order in 11 seems to be contradictory in that a child must be assessed before being placed, but if every teacher had a smaller class more effective and appropriate referrals could be made to begin with.
- The greatest impact could be made by applying proven remedial practices, compensatory methods and learning strategies. The Parallel Alternative Curriculum paired with a competency based instructional practice would offer the solid foundation necessary for success and accountability.